

I am an experienced broadcast journalist with years of working for local radio and TV stations in Boston and New York City, as well as years of network news reporting.

The duopoly rules have already greatly reduced the "voices" available to the viewing/listening public. And unfortunately, most of that public gets its news and information mainly from TV - local TV. The argument that cable, satellite and the Internet have made broadcast and cross ownership limitations unnecessary is false. Already the big players own outlets on all these platforms. They all sound and look alike, with similar editorial policies generated by one management (or individual) philosophy. And in some markets broadcast is still the only way most people view TV. The surprising example is Brooklyn, in NYC, where, we discovered after 9/11, 50% of homes do NOT have cable.

The virtually unlimited radio station ownership rules have ruined the concept of local radio and resulted in everyone's favorite broadcast ogre - Clear Channel. Hundreds if not thousands of jobs have disappeared and music playlists are generated centrally for all stations. Major recording companies PAY Clear Channel and other big owners to get their product heard. Payola by any other name.... We live at a time when we need MORE voices, not less. We need in depth news from all sides of the spectrum and the world. Not homogeneous newscasts and newspapers generated in single, multi-station/paper newsrooms by the same handful of people. Duopolies may look different to the unaware but their news and information are the same. Saving money and then making more money govern the so-called economies of scale - the SOLE reason for duopolies. Duopolies are not mated to produce more in-depth, informative newscasts that can serve all segments of the public. And big station owners want to transfer those duopoly-style economies to every station they own.

And it is not just news that suffers; creative entertainment is disappearing faster than ever. Everything looks the same now; imagine what it will be like when there are 3 major TV station groups and 3 major content producers!!!

The best way to help small station groups stay alive is to lift the digital mandate so they can spend their money on people and content and not on equipment that won't even be needed for years. It's difficult to justify a small station dropping a needed newscast because the money must be spent on the digital changeover -- when the station knows only 3 people in its viewing area have expensive digital-HD TV receivers.

As the active demise of AOL Time Warner shows - big is not necessarily better! Keep the ownership limitations, do NOT allow more TV duopolies in smaller markets, do NOT allow crossownership again (yes, I grew up in those days). We may not be able to undo the damage done to democracy -- and to our country.